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Concert: A Little Night Music: When Movies Were Silent

Ralph Ringstad Jr.

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A Little Night Music:

When Movies Were Silent



Friday, June 2, 2000

8:15 p.m.

Ford Hall

James J. Whalen Center for Music





A Little Night Music: When Movies Were Silent

claimed theater organist Ralph Ringstad Jr. '83 performs accompaniment to silent films made in Ithaca in 1916, when the Wharton Studios worked with the greatest stars of silent film

Welcome Arthur Ostrander, Dean, School of Music

Introduction to the Music Ralph Ringstad Jr. '83

Introduction to the Films Terry Harbin

Beatrice Fairfax Episode 4: "The Stone God"

An Indian prince arrives in town to avenge the theft of a stone Buddha many years earlier.

Starring Harry Fox, Grace Darling, Betty Howe, Nigel Barrie, James Gordon, Mike Rale, Warner Oland, and Evelyn Farris
25 minutes

Patria Episode 1: "Last of the Fighting Channings"

Irene Castle in the title role of Patria Channing discovers hidden treasures and prepares for her role in defending the United States.

10 minutes

Episode 3: "Winged Millions"

The Channing defense fund is stolen, and a building is burned to the ground.

Starring Irene Castle, Milton Sills, Warner Oland, and Mike Rale
10 minutes

Beatrice Fairfax Episode 7: "A Name for the Baby"

A politician is about to marry, only to find out he has a child by another woman. Will he do the honorable thing?

Starring Harry Fox, Grace Darling, Mae Marsh, Mary Cranston, Robin Townley, and Allan Murnane
25 minutes

Terry Harbin

Terry Harbin is an avid film historian and a virtual encyclopedia about Ithaca's 7-year reign over the burgeoning film industry. For the last 12 years, Harbin has been chronicling a history that is rapidly disappearing as silent films deteriorate. Thus far he has amassed an impressive collection of information and memorabilia on the serials, features, thrillers, and mysteries produced in the Ithaca area. His vaults have grown to rival those of any local museum and include a film collection with nine copies of original Ithaca-made pictures (all converted to video thanks in part to funding from the U.S. Library of Congress), as well as stacks of rare photographs—among them many behind-the-scenes and publicity shots. Some of these items are on display in the McHenry Lobby. Harbin, who works for the Tompkins County Library and lives in Ithaca, hopes that the library's move to a new, larger facility next fall will mean a resuscitation of the documentary news program he once produced in the 1980s. Harbin is ready to put his own mark on Ithaca's film history as a local documentary maker and record keeper.



Ralph Ringstad Jr. '83

Ralph Ringstad grew up in Whippany, New Jersey, and by age 7, he knew his calling: to play the organ. After nearly 10 years of piano study with William Griggs and Anita Gordon, Ringstad began organ studies with Frank Cimmino. At 17 he was performing alongside Cimmino on the 3/17 Wurlitzer theater pipe organ at the Suburban Restaurant in Wanaque, New Jersey. Ringstad made his formal concert debut at 18 playing the 4/33 Moller concert pipe organ at the New York Military Academy in Cornwall-on-Hudson, New York. During this time he also studied low brass with Peter Boor and Barbara Garrison '70 and played in various chamber and orchestral groups.

A 1983 graduate of Ithaca College, Ringstad holds a bachelor of fine arts degree in music with an emphasis in art history. His major instrument was the tuba, and he received extensive training in chamber and orchestral music under the guidance of tuba professor Dave Unland. He continued his organ studies at Ithaca with Frank Eldridge, George Damp, and Robert Parkins.

The variety of Ringstad's experience explains his unique and exciting approach to silent movie accompaniment. His film scores have earned critical acclaim from organists, conductors, and the public. He also credits his success in conducting and orchestration to being able to work closely with Charles Del Rosso and Ithaca professors Steven Baxter, Edward Gobrecht, Lawrence Doebler, Rodney Winther, and Malcolm Lewis.

Ringstad has performed musical duties for numerous religious congregations over the past 15 years, including St. John the Baptist Cathedral in Paterson, New Jersey, where he was minister of music and cultural affairs. In addition, he has performed on many of the major theater pipe organ installations throughout the United States, including those in the Brooklyn Paramount Theatre and Radio City Music Hall in New York City; the Senate Theatre in Detroit; the Auditorium Theatre in Rochester, New York; the Thomaston (Connecticut) Opera House; the Trenton (New Jersey) War Memorial; and many other facilities. In 1998 Ringstad produced the jazz/ballroom-dancing show that reopened the 1,600-seat Baker Theatre in Dover, New Jersey.

Ringstad is currently chief resident organist and theme show producer at the famous Darress Theatre in Boonton, New Jersey—the last remaining “reverse entry” theater operating in the United States. The audience enters from under the screen and stage. Built in 1919, the theater is composed of poured reinforced concrete. Ringstad affectionately calls it “a bomb shelter with a stage.” Nonetheless, the Darress Theatre serves as a wonderful venue for aspiring artists and experimental productions, in addition to classic movies.

Ringstad is also organist/choir director at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church in Swartswood, New Jersey, and principal ballpark organist for the American Minor League Somerset Patriots, in Bridgewater, New Jersey. He is a big baseball fan. Go Yankees and Patriots!

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